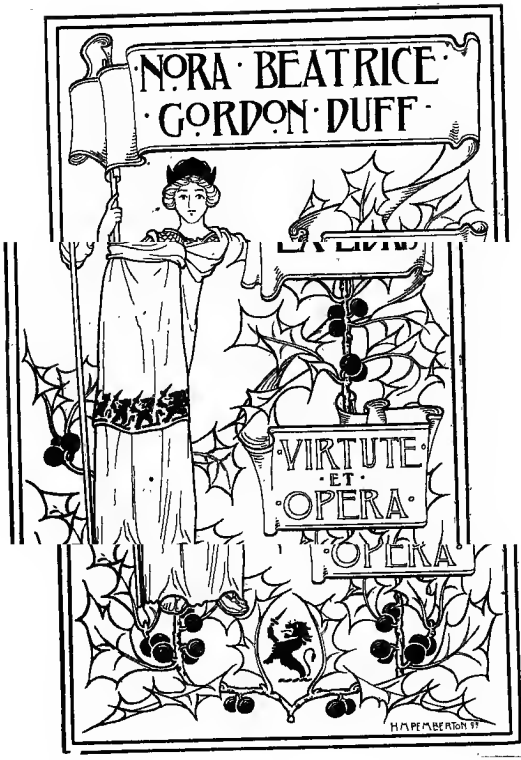
FANCIES AND FRAGMENTS.

WINIFRED M. LUCAS.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FANCIES

AND

FRAGMENTS

BY

WINIFRED M. (LUCAS)
le Bailly

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ERRATA.

Page 8. Waning Love, line 1. For "is" read "art."

Page 41. Last line. For "extends" read "extend."

Verses.

CLOUDS.

The sky hangs dark with its unfallen rain;
  And lo, I droop with sorrow unexpressed;
Say, shall the hour that bids these heavens restrain
No more their swelling grief, see *me* attain,
  Through tears, the ease of my o'er-laden breast?

And, when the clouds have burst, and in the sea
    Sunk shapeless, baring moon and stars to view,
Shall the old joys, if haply any be
Concealed behind my grief, come out in me,
    Pointing once more the pathways that I knew?

GO FORTH, GO FORTH.

Go forth, go forth, my shadowy love,—
  Of every star be free,
Through all the tremulous midnight move
  Till heaven is filled with thee:
My little claim to hold thee prove
  By thine immensity:
Then, ere the daylight dawn above,
  Return, and hide in me.

SLEEP AND LIFE.

Invoking life, I feel the surging tide
Of countless wants ordained to be denied;
Invoking sleep, I feel the hastening stream
Of minor wants merged in a want supreme.

IN AN ALBUM.

All possible merit I'd condense
  Of all I ever writ,
Investing in the present tense
  My capital of wit;
I'd tear from every verse the sense,
  Could this be rendered fit
To rob of its white innocence
  The page I mar with it.

FRAGMENT.

What ill is left for a man to do,
  Whose individual self rests light,
A bubble's weight, on the thought of you,
  That floods and softens all sound and sight?

CAPTIVITY.

He is dead, and the world is his grave
  To my senses; there beats in the air
  The continuous pulse of a steady despair,
To which I move, bound as the veriest slave.

He alive, by his side as I stood
  I was free,—free to love and to live;
  But now unto Sorrow my freedom I give
And fall into step with her great brotherhood.

LOVE AND DEATH.

While I was pondering lazily
  On love till death, Death rose and said,
"If Love with Death cannot agree,
  I struck your love this morning dead."

THE SUN.

Alas, I shrink at so keen a touch;
  I tremble to feel my soul so stirred;
I dare not look on the sun too much,
  Lest his death leave all creation blurred.

The sun is set, and my eyes are free
  To wander whither they most incline;—
Still clear,—to close on the things that be
  The lost sun's travelling to divine.

SOUL.

Once, once my soul stood forth, till then unguessed,
Free of the body, free of all the past,
In strong assertion of itself at last,
And oh, the wonder to be so possessed!
The heart's quick beatings, secrets half confessed,
And fears fictitious, to oblivion cast,
Fell from the soul, and life and death showed vast
To spirit sight, that hour unsealed,—and blessed.

A FANCY.

As Indian women pause before they go
  To bathe, and, dallying at the water's rim,
Asoka blossoms on its surface throw,
  Orange and red, from dusky hands and slim;
    So, pausing, do I deck with thoughts of thee
    The face of every joy that comes to me.

WILL AND DEED.

What chance shall move me?
  Thou holdest still
My oath to prove me
  Thy slave in will.

Should ill o'ertake thee,
  Or any need,
Then stoop to make me
  Thy slave in deed.

A CASTLE IN THE AIR.

Drag to the ground the castle that I built,
  The airy temple where I knelt so long?
Raze such high good to level it with guilt,
  Reduce my solitary right to wrong?

To Other than myself I turn me yet.—
  Thou, by whose Favour it was first begun,
It's glory to complete, wilt Thou not set
  Some Architect at work beyond the sun?

CALAMITY.

When great calamity strikes many down
To no one victim brings it less dismay,
For hungrier flames devour a mighty town
Than in the dust a single homestead lay.

Yet though the hope of all the world be gone,
There's but one ruin that I gaze upon:
And, though destruction all around be spread,
I mourn alone, and only he is dead.

LOSS.

When nature smiles like this, I grow
Sad as a child, whose paper toy
Yesterday's gale has torn away,
Who hears the temperate breezes blow,
And hates the sound, heard once with joy,
That tells of his accustomed play.

BLOSSOMS.

When on the root of the asoka tree
  Your foot is set, the unopened blossoms break
Out of their blindness into bloom, to see
  What found them dead, and left them wide awake.

They with full petals gazing after you
Far as they may, grow to perfection too:
Touch me, oh love, but with your foot, and lo,
Far as they may, my answering beauties blow.

TO A LADY.

Oh nature's crown, and endless boast,
  A worthy lover at your side
Dissolves my faint hope's lingering ghost,
  And humbles me, but not my pride.

And do I grudge that *you* should move
In fields unlimited of love,
Who by your worth gave *me* the right
To one emotion infinite ?

ILLUSION.

Sea and sky together seem
  At the far horizon's edge ;
Foolish fruit of foolish dream !
  Of our fate they seem the pledge.

Folly ! Sail a mile or two,
  And before you will retreat
The horizon's line of blue ;—
  And the simile's complete !—

MOTHERLESS.

Child heart bereft, child love amazed,
Child hands in vain to heaven upraised,

And mute child prayers, from heavy eyes
Melting, with tears for sacrifice :

Child spirit, shivering 'neath the blow
Of new, and yet unmeasured, woe :

Child strength, thus shortly called upon
To bear, it's chief inspirer gone :

Child brain, with coolly pillowed head,
Still aching on uncomforted,

And shuddering through the lullaby,
" I shall not see her—till I die."

NIGHT.

Oh strange sad night that brings no rest, but woe,
  Break not in stars, nor let a cynic moon
Melt with white light the darkness here below,
  For with the darkness I am most in tune:
  I mourn the dead day that has passed too soon,
And with it others I shall never know.

PARTING.

I, with grief unmeasured smarting,
  Vainly question, "Can you yet
Render, now that we are parting,
  What I lost when first we met?"

Ah, was Reason dead or sleeping,
  That I heard her not reprove,
When I flung into your keeping
  The Unreason of my love?

CONTRADICTION.

Active, to love; and passive, to be loved;
  I only know it is not so with me;
To act is effort, and is far removed
  From my still heart's assured sufficiency.

And to be loved, and passive! When a breath
  That Love gives forth, weighs down the unsteadied air
With its demand, incentive even to death:—
  To love, we live; but, being loved, we dare.

WANING LOVE.

Love that is waning, gently out of sight
  Sink on your swift inevitable way!
You rose, remember, on a starless night,
  Before my skies lit up with sudden day.

And, with the dark through which you only shone,
The need my heavens had once of you is gone!
Slip through the blue, and leave the sun's path clear;
Nor think to live in such light-laden air.

FURZE BLOSSOM.

I loved you with a love untold;
  And you,—you loved enough that day
From a bright bush of burning gold
  To tear me off a prickly spray;
    And ah, my heart beat high to see
    What those soft fingers dared for me!

I took it thence; and, glad indeed
  I felt, while I condoled their smart,
That, if for me your hands would bleed,
  I had the power to heal your heart:
    And, on that field of fiery flower
    We made a lasting truce that hour.

APPREHENSION.

We tremble lest sleep derive
  Bad dreams from the day that's sped,—
But seldom in sleep we strive
  With the forms of our actual dread:
I am more in the grave, alive,
  Than ever I shall be, dead.

Such fear of the time to come!—
  Sincerely, I think, you may,
When you lie for ever dumb,
  Have nothing you need to say.
Mourn now, if you will, your home,—
  'Twill be nothing to you that day.

AN OLD SIMILE.

The still moon casts upon the sea
  Her influence, mightier than the sun:
Her chilling silent mandates be
Stamped on the tide indelibly;
In the wind's face, at her decree
  Perforce the unwilling waters run.

Ah, not so silent, not so cold
  Is she my turbulent soul reflects;
And less reluctantly are rolled
It's passionate waves, when they behold
Her face, who doth my being mould,
  And every turn of tide directs.

SUNSET.

'Gainst the soft languor of the sea,
Bound now to peace, the creamy waves
In broken tender protest fall;
And thunder clouds, in majesty
Suspended, the sun's glory laves,
With lessening power enchanting all.

Oh, feebler, rosier, lower still!
As the sun sinks his magic grows:
And now, half-hid behind that bank
Of savage cloud, he doth instil
More awe then any noontide knows:
Hail now his triumph where he sank!

FRUIT AND THORNS.

Shall I grow fruit for only thee,
  And thorns for all the world beside?
Trust not the miracle, for see,
  How thick the thorny growth and wide.

The sudden fruit, as suddenly
  As love demands it, may subside;
Shall I grow fruit for only thee,
  And thorns for all the world beside?

Princess, tread not so fearlessly
  The brambly pathway at my side!
"The fruit and thorns are one," said she,
  "Love's burning bush is deified;
"The thorns are precious fruit to me;
  "The fruit is dead to all beside."

FRAGMENT.

Oh where's the hand that led me into heaven,
  And filled my spirit with electric life,
Twixt which, and death, my soul's dark cloud is riven;
  Ill chosen field for such titanic strife.

The strength I seemed to gain what has it brought me?
  A barren After, and a lost Before!
For the aerial glories that love taught me
  In earth's base air I suffocate the more.

A BIRTHDAY.

Granting still in all that's fair
Death's inevitable share,
Shall the old ungrateful earth
Fail to celebrate thy birth?

No, the heaven such stars as thou
Clearly do ensure us now,
Opens up to endless days
And admits our human praise.

DREAMS.

I need thee not! Then, Sleep, away!
  Before the fast approaching morn
Drape all the rainy world in grey,
  And rise on me in timely scorn,
I must dream out a waking dream;—
  I have a sunny crop to reap
Of ears, that, through the darkness, gleam
  Too brightly to be sunk in sleep.

TO A LADY.

In my bleak heart lie dry, unruffled leaves,
Left by the hand of an unlovely frost,
Shorn of their graces, life for ever lost,
Scentless and shunned, whose mere remembrance grieves.
Dispassionate, cold, I view the autumnal world.—
On what wild tempest are the dead leaves hurled?
What voice is that? What hand was raised to me?
My heart's alight! Each dim recess I see!
Passion, uncalled for, bids her dreaded heat
Inflame the pile, and drives me to your feet.

FRAGMENT.

Aye, you may deride me, but how could I know?
  'Twas pity that pulled at my sleeve till I turned
Where one moved along with a heartful of woe,
  And a claim on my help to be answered or spurned,
"I'm safe here," I said, "for love never looked so."

MEETING.

Friend, in the little moment that we meet,
  Your lightest words I cannot pause to weigh,
For I must write them in my heart complete,
  Lest I should starve upon a lonelier day.

Ah heaven! that you, worst mischief and best good
  Of all my life, should too indifferent be
To aid or injure, as you only could,
  My claim, new made on immortality.

MORNING.

Oh enchantment! What a day!
  Velvet shadows, smiling sun,
Dark firs near and far away,
Softening through the webs blue-grey,
  Out of morning freshness spun.

Early skies of pallid blue
  Yearn above the leafless trees,
Spring's refreshments to renew;
"Life is laid asleep in you
  Though with death your form agrees."

THE DEAD.

Aye 'tis well to love the dead;
  On a grave, once lit,
Love's fire is always nourished,
  The past has food for it,
And the chill present to the blaze
  Would ever nearer sit.

For such a fire new fuel I bring;—
  From the past I make
Fresh songs upon this grave to fling,
  And burn there for your sake.
So, sleeping, you are mine, beloved,
  As I am yours, awake.

ONE IS IN THE WORLD.

One is in the world,
  Drawing painful breath,
From sin to sorrow hurled,
  Almost run to death,
In whom my joy for earth and heaven blossometh.

Did he faint and fall,
  Did he fail and die,
If my soul at all
  Lasts eternally,
What it loves in him must immortal be.

Shall infinity
  The one infinite
Element in me
  Leave always out of sight?
With the body then better die outright.

A QUESTION.

Poor body, sinking ever toward the grave
  Death keeps for you; poor heart; uneven beat
Of countless petty pulses; wave on wave
  Of blood now cold, and now at fever heat!

Out of you all, what profits now, or aids
Where fall at last the deathly cypress shades?
How comes the love of such another one
To seem an immortality begun?

ROSES.

Roses you brought me, "They will die," you said,
That was a year ago; they are not dead,
Those I received from you, but those you gave,
As I have done, you'll hardly care to save.

Those I took from you, fresh I have them still
In my heart's keeping, and the same might bloom
As well in yours;—only, I know they will
Die there to give another summer room.

THE FUTURE.

Oh fate unperceived that the future may bring;—
  Oh flowers of the past that are barren as yet;
Oh thoughts I have cherished to heal me, or sting;
  Oh woes I remember, and joys I forget;
I fear you no longer for good or for ill,
  Your worst in the end with my best may agree;
All, all I pass by, and interrogate still
  The face of the death that is waiting for me.

They meet there together, the secrets untold,
  The needs unexpressed, and the ecstasies hid;—
They meet there together, the new and the old;
  The good I neglected, the ill that I did;
They meet there together, the present and past,—
  The sorrow and love that the world may not see;
Will they fail with my mortal, discovered at last
  In the face of the death that is waiting for me?

DEPARTURE.

What is it that goes from me? What is this
  That leaves me weeping? Ah, too little known,
Too seldom met, though never met amiss
  You were, to leave me feeling thus alone.

Whence then these tears? I can but think they spring
From long ago, when life was blossoming;
And that I mourn for you, not all, in truth,
As vanished friend, but as a part of youth.

LIGHT AND SHADE.

By the sun's aid how little can I see
  Beside the radiance love's least shadows throw!
To strike one feeble flickering light for thee
  Were glory greater than the sun could know.

Then, *they* are only shadows, which illume
The obscurity of life's long darkened room;
And *that* the world's Light, by the which I grope
To clutch the garment of a shadowy hope.

THE WIFE.

Love's little, spent to no intent,
  A ready profit flings me;
But my heart's best I did invest
  But meagre interest brings me.

Unthinking, light, I laughed last night,
  And many eyes turned towards me:—
I smile the whole forth of my soul,
  And not a look rewards me.

Did aught betide me that I died,
  My world indeed should scorn me!
From one 'twere so great pain to go,
  And he the last to mourn me.

LINES.

If man no further may explore,
  If to be dupes of mystery
Be all the life we live, 'twere more
  With our perplexities to die,

And slip life's leash, and scorn to play
  Dead earnest in so light a piece.—
Did fact pronounce thee lost for aye,
  'Twere little waste that I should cease.

But on that morrow all depend,
  To which life's sands are running down,
In utter night earth's woes to end,
  Or raptures with full daylight crown.

DROUGHT.

In time of drought a sweeping flood would do
  Less good than harm: who thought of thirst to die
Life beaten out ere they to quench it knew,
  Would perish rather of the remedy.

And I, who faint for sight and sound of you,
  Find all the channels of my joy run dry;—
Yet, were they flooded, love might perish too,
  That lives so much on what the heavens deny.

TRANSLATED FROM THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

In the forest's bleak distress
  One forgotten leaf, no more,
Saves this branch from nakedness;
  One bird lingers to deplore.

In my heart there stays behind
  One sweet singer left alone;
Ah, but in the autumn wind
  Drowned, alas, is every tone.

Fall, poor leaf, and fly, oh bird,
  Die out, love, where winter's seen!
Only, songster, be thou heard,
  On my grave when woods are green.

———

TRIOLETS.

Oh break it and go
  If my heart you're for breaking!
Your magic to show,
  Oh break it and go!
But stay not to know
  'Tis life you are taking;
Oh break it and go,
  If my heart you're for breaking.

Oh what have I done
  That I cannot forget you?
Such grief to have won
  Oh, what have I done?
A work you've begun
  Self-imposed, never set you:—
Oh, what have I done
  That I cannot forget you?—

TRIOLETS.

You've left a strange, sad world behind,
  Wherein, bewildered, I am turning,
A face as sweet as yours to find;
  You've left a strange, sad world behind,
And to my loss I cannot blind
  The eyes wherein 'tis always burning.
You've left a strange, sad world behind,
  Wherein, bewildered, I am turning.—

In slumber last night
  At least I was near you;
You stood in my sight
  In slumber last night.
Sleep gave me the right
  To see you and hear you;
In slumber last night
  At least I was near you.

Light that to my waking eyes
  Hinted of so strange a morrow,
In the heat, and the surprise,
  Light that to my waking eyes
Over early seemed to rise,
  Ah! I closed them to my sorrow!
Light that to my waking eyes
  Hinted of so strange a morrow.

Love I met at first with scorn,
  Little guessing, little knowing,
You have left me now forlorn,
  Love I met at first with scorn!
Albeit heavy to be borne,
  Most you hurt in the foregoing,
Love I met at first with scorn
  Little guessing, little knowing.

TRIOLETS.

You did not hear that sound, I know,
  Though close together we are standing;—
I would I were as deaf, for oh,
  You did not hear that sound, I know,
For you too far away and low,
  Though every nerve of mine commanding.
You did not hear that sound, I know,
  Though close together we are standing.

Each soul must have a second sight;
  You do not see what I am seeing;
With morning sun this street is bright;—
  Each soul must have a second sight,
And, in a long past starry night,
  I live, and move, and have my being.
Each soul must have a second sight;
  You do not see what I am seeing.

Oh, I've a tale that must be told;
  But how to tell it, I've no notion.—
The plot is easy to unfold;
  Oh, I've a tale that must be told,
And which, though it be wondrous old,
  I scarce can utter for emotion.
Oh, I've a tale that must be told,
  But how to tell it I've no notion.

How strait the world is, yet how wide,
  That leaves such space for separation,
And us seems purposed to divide.
  How strait the world is, yet how wide;
So strait indeed that side by side
  We cannot stand in close relation.
How strait the world is, yet how wide,
  That leaves such space for separation.

BALLADE.

I never knew, oh, lady mine,
  Your soul's obscure retreat
Until I felt the warmth of thine
  Return my spirit's heat;
Then both our loves rushed forth to meet,
  And bade ourselves pursue,
And lay at one another's feet
  The utmost either knew.

Met at Love's immemorial shrine,
  Did we our senses cheat
In finding worship so divine,
  Devotion so complete?
If so, it was a brave conceit,
  And we believed it true,
Who tasted then of good and sweet
  The utmost either knew.

What rare delights did love design!
  The food of gods to eat,
And nectar poured in place of wine
  With that immortal meat;
Above the clouds an airy seat,
  Earth bathed in rosy hue,
And, loving, every day to meet,
  The utmost either knew.

ENVOY.

Lady, though we hereafter greet,
  Still Earth will claim her due,
And bid us own life's grand deceit
  The utmost either knew.

BALLADE.

Night quenched at last the unhappy day ;
  The mourner slept upon his bed,
And, in his sleep, I heard him say,
  " How wasted were the tears I shed,
The dust and ashes on my head,
  And all the state that woes maintain.
My grief on sable wings is fled ;
  The dead are all alive again.

" Behind the clouds that fall away
  When Thor is spent that thunderèd,
The constant stars doth Heaven display,
  In their old order, overhead ;
So, those I mourned in hopeless dread
  Stand round about me, clear and plain ;
And I, who wept, sing forth instead,
  The dead are all alive again.

" Oh, piteous forms, with what dismay
  Have ye to life surrendered ;
Why shrink so much from death's decay
  Back into living to be led ?
Is it such grief on earth to tread ?
  So bitterly do ye complain
Of those sweet words I utterèd,
  ' The dead are all alive again ' ?

ENVOY.

" Friend, as the morning broke," he said,
  " I woke with wondrous little pain
To find them gone, the unwilling dead
  Who would not be alive again."

BALLADE OF EXPERIENCE.

"Hail Death" the elder voices said,
  "The crownèd king of all below!"
I only laughed, and shook my head:
  "While he and I are living,—no!
The enchanted path by which we go
  Was never cut through death's domain;
Nor could this bright stream thither flow."
  (Their wisdom I denied in vain).

"If any here have perishèd
  Ourselves more favoured well we know;
By joys like these could none be led
  Predestined to the feet of woe.
Shall this mild breeze a tempest blow?
  These love mists fall in blinding rain?"
The voices called on Time to show;
  Their wisdom I denied in vain.

They spoke of darker paths to tread;
  Feet that went lightly to and fro,
Whither they had not chosen, led;
  Of sure and unimagined foe;
Of evils scarce perceived that grow:—
  The scorn I cared not to restrain
Back on me now those voices throw,
  Whose wisdom I denied in vain.

ENVOY.

Sad prophets! true ye were, for oh,
  'Tis all my love, and all my pain,
And all my life confirm you so,
  Whose wisdom I denied in vain.

BALLADE.

The lightning's question through the sky
  With keen doubt edged it's breathless way;
Hear now the thunder's staunch reply
  Peal courage on the sky's dismay!
Or, that the heavens were dreary, say,
  Long by the sun uncomforted,
Light breaks at last the expectant gray.
  The tollings bell's unanswerèd.

The grief long-felt, the ancient sigh
  Some fresh, sweet breeze may charm away;
And the torn sea waits hopefully
  A lessening of the tempest's sway:
The sailor's straining vision may
  Discern in time the signal red:
Dark night attends the instructed day:
  The tolling bell's unanswerèd.

The summer rain falls tenderly
  On planted flower, and flowering spray,
And questions them, who thirsty lie,
  If for long drought they feared decay?
Lo, with a fragrant answer they
  The enchanted atmosphere have fed,
"What if we thought so yesterday?"
  The tolling bell's unanswerèd.

ENVOY.

What question's worth a yea or nay?
  Yet some still promise, left unsaid,
Would seem to drown the words we say,
  "The tolling bell's unanswerèd."

ROUNDELS.

There's nothing more for me to do!
  His grave with flowers is covered o'er;—
Ah, might I creep beneath them too!
  There's nothing more!

Either let life a glimpse restore
  Of that lost goal I moved unto,
And now in vague unrest deplore;—

Or some strong, pitiful Hand endue
  Me with the peace I had before
The first hard breath of life I drew:
  There's nothing more.

There's only this between us now;—
  To meet him, where the fault was his,
I will not move a step, I vow:
  There's only this.

Love's friction I'd be loth to miss;
  For, wroth with *him*, I'm proving how
Exquisite even anger is.

The uncertain voice, the averted brow,
  Will only go to swell the bliss
When his excuses I allow;
  There's only this.

Is *her* heart dead, who quickens mine
  To life of palpitating dread,
Wherewith all holiest thoughts combine?
  Is *her* heart dead?

Ask more, and less is answered:
  There's none can help us to divine
How much is felt, how little said.

Upon its self-illumined shrine
  What soul was ever clearly read?
Then of no other hope a sign!
  Is *her* heart dead?

ROUNDELS.

Oh come to me to-night in sleep,
  And fire my dreams with ecstasy!
The livelong weary day I weep;—
  Oh, come to me!

Where dead delights so many be,
  What other joy have I to keep
Alive, except thy memory?

And, when in death I slumber deep,
  Beloved, let some brave thought of thee
Down through the damp and darkness creep;—
  Oh, come to me.

And so they died, whom Akbar gave
  Sweets from the casket's fatal side,
With ne'er a flavour of the grave;
  And so they died.

Another sentence I abide:
  Oh, they are sweet, the smiles I crave!—
Yet safer 'twere to be denied.

A double heart some beauties have.
  Too late I ask, is this thy pride,
To say of them thou dost enslave,
  "And so they died!"?

Yes I can see the end, writ plain
  In the dark sky; but 'neath this tree,
Where I have stood, I will remain;
  Yes, I can see.

Though vivid shall the lightnings be;—
  With the tree's fall though I be slain,
Oh, wherefore, whither should I flee?

With clinging arms will I maintain
  My right to perish faithfully;
And close against the trunk I strain;
  Yes, I can see.

ROUNDELS.

Nothing new are grief and care,
  Multiplied where joys are few;
'Tis a truth to any clear,
  Nothing new.

In the wonderment of you
  I have lost my old despair,
Waking as from false to true.

All love's spells are ancient, dear,
  Though we doubt it; lovers do.
So may heaven itself declare
  Nothing new.

MOTHERLESS.

Two Roundels.

1

The world's asleep, and not a few
  Of saddest spirits slumber deep;
Cans't thou not rest a little too?
  The world's asleep.

Though baby grief is held so cheap,
  Dear are the tears that prove it true.
The breast is cold where thou should'st weep.

Ah, must thou wake the whole night through?
  The day will come, and tears will keep!
Heartbroken still, and nought to do!
  The world's asleep.

2

Too soon, oh sun, too harshly bright!
  It seems almost unkindly done
To hurt these sleepless eyes with light
  So soon, oh sun!

This moment's respite, barely won
  From the black thief that robbed the night,
You've ended, ere 'twas well begun.

What medicine for this aching sight
  So hurt and dazed with finding none?
You've killed the last vague hope outright,
  Too soon, oh sun!

RONDELS.

When Love lives on in one,
  And in the other dies,
Which is the most undone,
  And which the longest sighs?

For me, I most would shun
  The unworthy heart he flies,
When Love lives on in one,
  And in the other dies.

Who swiftest doth outrun
  The joy that satisfies,
Has least beneath the sun,
  And most himself denies,
When Love lives on in one,
  And in the other dies.

What is the spring to me
  Whose flowers are done to death?
Their petals scattered see,
  While nature blossometh!

What promise can there be
  With not a bulb beneath?
What is the spring to me
  Whose flowers are done to death?

Lo, to each living tree
  Come storms and winter's breath;—
My perished flowers lie free
  Upon the barren heath.
What is the spring to me,
  Whose flowers are done to death?

RONDEL.

Oh, delights that are gone for ever,
  Sweet words spoken and heard in vain,
Pleasure barren of all but pain,
  Work neglected, and waste endeavour!

Can things past from the present sever
  While their memories we retain,
Oh, delights that are gone for ever,
  Sweet words spoken and heard in vain?

Sounds may die, but their echoes never;
  Joys may pass, but their ghosts remain,
  Pale and distant, a mocking train.
As we name you, we well may shiver,
Oh, delights that are gone for ever!

———

VILANELLE.

If dreams could of themselves come true,
  Or airy castles touch the ground,
How should I dare to dream of you?

How should my thrilling heart renew
  It's vision bold of rapture crowned,
If dreams could of themselves come true?

If fact apace from fancy grew,
  And every wish fulfilment found,
How should I dare to dream of you?

On Fancy's wings that lightly flew
  A sudden weight of care were bound,
If dreams could of themselves come true.

Oh, loud in every wind that blew
  A warning voice would surely sound.
How should I dare to dream of you?

But since fulfilments are so few,
  Let fancies all the more abound.
If dreams could of themselves come true,
How should I dare to dream of you?

PANTOUM.

Barttelot.

The trumpets tongue's alarm
  Is wakening to molest
An enemy slow to harm,
  Asleep in his mother's breast.

Reveillée to break his rest
  Nor love nor hate can sound,
Asleep in his mother's breast,
  In lethargy so profound.

Hate's force on an equal ground
  Love rallies herself to meet:
In lethargy most profound
  He lies 'neath the trampling feet.

And neither will he entreat,
  And neither will he applaud;—
He lies 'neath the trampling feet,
  Past knowledge of force or fraud.

Above on the battle sward
  The combatants eager stand;
Past knowledge of force or fraud,
  He never will lift a hand.

And who shall understand?
  To point the undoubted way
He never will lift a hand!
  And nobody else can say.

A tower of silence grey
  His secrets the world defy;
And nobody else can say,
  Where every one can lie.

SONNETS.

At Southsea.

Yonder the island, white with last night's snow,
Divides the separate blue of sea and sky;
And now across that passive brilliancy
And moveless tide, a monster motion! lo,
Severely white its spotlessness, although
It serves the ends of soiled humanity.
Great 'Himalaya,' you have crowned for me
The brightest scene that English eye need know.

Aye, anchor there, a morning phantom! Wait
My eye's full pleasure. The artistic sense
Is overnice such grand effect to mar
With detail dread of individual fate:
Men sink to awful insignificance;
Else should I praise you, death ship that you are?

On the proposed change of the Jewish Sabbath in New York.

You, who have fronted scorn and violence
  In high disdain of all the Christian world;
You, who have met with an unmoved defence
  The fiercest shocks by Gentile malice hurled;
Who, in strong union, born of stronger hope,
  Together spurned, your common fate defied,
Nor ever questioned of your power to cope
  With man, whom God upheld; you trebly tried,

And trebly constant people, must you now
  To sordid ends your pride of old resign,
Who unto death were willing once to bow?
  Must you so far below the past decline,
At Traffic's nod, your long enlarging crown
Of ancient Sabbaths, careless, to lay down?

SONNETS.

Spirit.

Oh, grand immortal spirit I have felt,
  Exalt me to a height above the pride
Of my new state; whose essence seemed to melt
  Long latent floods of soul, and, glorified,
Showed me myself, shaped other than I knew,
  To different purpose, ends unrealized,—
Equal reward to equal effort due!
  Oh, glorious hint on what I misapprized,

Sublime assurance, grand affirmative
  To the faint questioning of humanity,
Leaving no doubt that it is gain to live;
  Oh, ample space to breathe in when I die,
Evolved of solitude, of love, of pain.—
  'Tis in the world I seek myself in vain.

Ambition.

To be the conscious agent of thy good;
  To pluck a briar from thy robe; to spread
A mossy carpet whose luxuriance should
  Lie soft and tender for thy feet to tread;
To hedge thee in with my experience
  From any ill disguised; the poisonous flower
To indicate, lest in thine innocence
  Thou mightest gather it, and rue the hour.

This work alone my heart's repose would be,
  No more, no less, but fate has given me less;
Too far from one another's side are we
  For folding arms, or spoken tenderness.
And yet the yearnings of so vain a love
All tangible pleasure are enthroned above.

SONNETS.

A Day-Dream.

Light-hearted as a bird, and fancy free,
In wandering through an open, sunny glade,
Methought I heard a sobbing from the shade
Cast by a wide and greenly branching tree.
Thence rushed a boy, and piteous asked of me
Why, as I lived, I had so long delayed,
And led me on, to where a weeping maid
Sat, even in grief, most wonderful to see!

Then flashed away the boy on sudden wings.
In vain I strove, with solace adequate
To meet her sorrow, which I could not guess,
Until she said, "The misery that stings
Is, though called fair, to be so desolate,
And lack the heart to live with loneliness.

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* * * * * *

In thy dear presence, where my love so great
Doth shake me nigh to death, my tenderness
With all the strength it leaves me, I must press
Back on my bursting heart, there to await
The smallest use thy need may first create.
Ah, could its interest make thy least pain less,
How would I nurse my capital distress,
How should my heart its wealth appreciate!

Can it be so? thy chance demand to meet
For comfort, can it be that my love may
Trade on itself? of it's own fever heat
Make ice to cool thee on a sultry day?
Of it's own lonely years one hour make sweet
In time for thee?—oh, hasten, time, and say

SONNETS.

Nature.

She whom I loved, not human in degree,
And so I deemed unchanging, is no more
Worthy my trust, nor shall a thought restore
This wistful heart it's love; and Time shall see
No mystic midnight draw her back to me,
With whom my lovely sojournings are o'er!
Nay, of the very light she loves to pour
Warm on the world, my spirit would be free!

For once, when she the whole day long had smiled
Tuning her murmurous insect strings, my ear
Caught the swift sob of human anguish wild;
When I besought her aid, and drew her near,
Lo, she I dreamed omnipotent stood there
Blind, deaf, and dumb, beside a moaning child.

Eternal Punishment.

The unquenchable fire, the worm that cannot die,
The sinner's dire irrevocable doom
Who unrepentant passes to the tomb,
All mercy in creation's plan belie.
And Faith that birdlike up to heaven would fly
Strikes on this rock her quickly shattered plume,
And sinks through surging doubt to baffling gloom
Dragged by false doctrine from the pitiful sky.

Then hasten, Truth, her dimming sight to free
From this black guide to atheism! Tear
The veil from off this lost consistency!
What though itself the doom eternal be?
Shall mercy leave the individual there
More than to serve the ends of final charity?

SONNETS.

"I NEVER COME."

I never come to seek you in the wide
Dead world your body lies in; I confess
No wish to thread that blazoned wilderness
Of griefs set forth in stone, which ought to hide
Beneath the natural grasses, unbelied
By over boldness. And to me there's less
Found of you there than my own thoughts possess
And to each moment of my life confide.

You must be always near me. There's less space
Between us now than we joined hands across
In age, experience, grief, when first we met.
Not till *love* dies, seek I the burial place;—
Not till *love* loses, I lament my loss;
Nor, till I've left it, will I name regret.

SINCERITY.

Not all I love; and more, not one I hate,
Yet oft must give a smile my heart belies,
Which, loth to learn it's inconsistencies,
Impatient, pays the exacted social rate,
And, wearied, turns away: then to abate
The smart of such an obligation tries,
By shifting off its pallid load of lies,
Of which Necessity ordained the weight.

But, looking back on each retreating day,
Crowning it's low horizon, I descry
The unblemished hours that I have spent with thee
To whom the truth is so divine to say
That I forget the inevitable lie
Outside thy presence still awaiting me.

SONNETS.

Anchorage.

The soft breeze urged on me "Cast anchor here!
No safer shelter than this sparkling bay,
Where waves transparent on the soft sands lay
Their cool caresses, and athwart the air
Flash jubilant sea-birds: where the winds despair
Of forcing entrance!" I was fain to stay;
And now the cliffs are mouldering away,
The dark clouds ominous, the tempest near.

From long disuse my vessel is not fit
To meet exposure to the open sea:
And fierce the strain is on my anchored heart!
Alas, alas, that I had anchored it
Beyond, where adamantine shelters be,
And whence no vessel ever need depart.

Reality.

Ah, could I always from my nightly sleep
Distil so rare a happiness, and sink
The real in the unreal, then I think
My grateful heart would never let me weep:
For each day's path, however dark and steep
Must needs advance me ever toward the brink
Of lovely sleep, from fancied wells to drink
Impossible draughts of rapture, long and deep

And yet, unreal, impossible, I dare
To question if such midnight treasures be:
For, if your vision clearer is to me
Than all the faces come between us are,
Sleep dawns on realms of past Reality,
Than any waking present truer far.

SONNETS.

Life and Love.

Oh Life and Love, must one survive the other,
And I be cast on only Life? Oh, Sleep,
Thyself averse my troubled soul to steep,
Wilt thou, my waking misery to smother,
In pity's name, not delegate another?
Scarce 'neath his wing Love's voice had bade me creep,
When lo, on Love the vivid lightnings leap
Hurling a bolt—nor spare for Life another.

Oh partial Heaven, so far to favour Love
With Death, while still ignoring wounded Life.—
I sought them not, yet am by both oppressed.—
For that is gone I ever placed above
The other, which remains, a severing knife
Betwixt my pain and it's forbidden rest.

Divided.

"Ah no," she said, "and it can never be!
  Near half thine age divides us; I am here
Far, far beneath though straining up to thee,
  Far, far behind by many a finished year:
Yet not so far but I can read thy glance
  Cast back on me, and forward flash my love,
Through cruel years of thy deplored advance
  Which even love is impotent to move.

Yet if Eternity even never can
  'Twixt human souls affianced intervene,
Shall we fall back before this trifling span
  Of paltry years that push their way between?
No, by love's hand led forward, I on thee
  Am gaining fast as thou return'st to me!

SONNETS.

To a Lady.

One Thought all good; one Image pure and whole,
Which opening first on these unconscious eyes
Struck wealth ungauged of subtle sympathies,
Mute with the marvel of the awakened soul;
Good Thought, all action of the same control;
Strong in thy truth let my existence rise;
Good Image, draw the flooding ecstasies
Thou dost inspire, that none should miss the goal.

For what thou art, and what I think of thee
Mean what I love, and what I hope of Heaven.
Thou art the pathway life would lead me by;
And though the sweet leaves of thy presence be
Through the keen autumn of thine absence driven,
They cannot touch the Thought's vitality.

The River Ocean.

"This is the earth" said they of old "no land
But lies within our knowledge; and, to show
There's to be known, but only what WE know,
And understood, but what WE understand,
The River Ocean bounds on every hand
This little world where we are masters, Lo,
The Gods, who dwell beyond the river's flow
Scarcely more knowledge than ourselves command."

Oh eyes, too blind to your own blindness; minds
Too proud and strait one question to admit
Unsolved, or know for ignorance the tide;
Still, still your river round your circle winds.
But not in vain have others fronted it;
For lo, what worlds upon the other side!

TO A LADY.

1

What I have written who will read?
  Where I have blundered who will blame,
And who will praise where I succeed?
  I questioned thus before you came,
And answered to myself for me
Whate'er I write, or do, or be.

2

When I so shrank before the dreary night,
  Parting from you, I did not ever guess
It broken with a thousand points of light,
  Sprung forth unknown to catch your loveliness:

Yet not less known than I myself, belov'd,
Until your coming and departure proved
The different lustres that my life can throw
Back on the fountain whence it's glories flow.

3

There is a day that ends all life for me;
  Yet know I not, enough for actual dread,
If it shall come in all Eternity,
  Or if 'tis past, and I already dead.

I mean the day I look my last on you;
  Each time we part, I know not if I die,
Though I live on;—and Death may wound me to
  My human end, and yet not mortally.

A NAME.

As the diamond from the stones,
  The rose in the world of flowers,
Your name stands forth from the varied tones
  Of this human speech of ours.

Be it uttered low or loud,
  Be it said for praise or blame,
A star it shines through the parting cloud,
  For it is your very name.

The Seamaid.

The Seamaid.

SEA PALACE. NIGHT AFTER STORM.

FIRST SEAMAID *(Aside)*—
No need to quit the dance to be
True to my solitude!—the sea
Hums no less constant than my blood
To this new tune of solitude.
Like waves where unseen currents flow,
Swells through my heart this wondrous woe,
Impelled by something undefined,
Outside the index of my mind.

CHORUS OF SEA-PEOPLE—
Let us dance to a song
That is musical and low;
Lest we weary, not long,—
Lest we sadden, not slow,—
With the light moving waves should a sea-song go!

Oh, light goes the ball,
And light go the years,
Three hundred in all,
Ere our joy disappears:
His time is pure waste who spends it in fears.

To fear needs the scope
Of a being not ours;
To fear admits hope,
And to neither our powers
Extends. Let us glean, then, the most from the hours!

FIRST SEAMAID *(Aside)*—
(The lights flare up, the dance is long;
Do I my new-found sadness wrong?
No, lest I lose this pain I feel,
It's sacred presence I conceal.
It hints at such enormous hope
My acts therein have boundless scope:
So I may dance, and I may play,
And seem the same as yesterday;
Remembering, on the dancing floor,
Myself I never knew before;
Remembering, as I lightly turn,
Myself remains for me to learn.)

SECOND SEAMAID—
The swelling sea bids us suspend
Our revels now; the uncertain light
With gusty shock of waves flares bright,
Then almost dies. Come, sister, lend
Your leisure to recount to me
Last night's experience on the sea.

FIRST SEAMAID—
You know last night the thunder burst
Into the cave, and the skies' wrath
Struck terror to my heart at first;
But something made me venture forth.
The sea was one white burial place;—
A world of dead sea-people shone,
In foam, upon the ocean's face,
Whose brief three hundred years were gone
I wondered then if you and I
Would in the same foam bed be cast,—
Or if in separate flakes should fly
Our sister love, dissolved at last.
Such a vain question from my mind
A-sudden swept, when, on the wind,
There came a note I never heard
Before, but guessed a human word.
"Help, help," the word was strange, but I
Seemed to swim on instinctively
Toward the sound. "Help, help!" again
I heard, and then, from out the gloom
I saw a mighty vessel strain
Against her fate; while he, from whom
The cry had come, unconscious lay,
A human body, fair as day
Cast on black night, or life on death.

The dead foam held him underneath ;
The lightnings from above played down
Near as they dared, about the crown
Of circling golden hair, that wide
Spread round his face, and them out-vied.
(Aside) (For me all other gold is dim ;
No future joys are left to praise ;
That living Present, passed with him,
Consumed them in a brief, bright blaze.
Ah me, how weak my words, how weak !
Yet 'tis not I myself who speak :
No weakness in the voice survives
That rings with love's superlatives ;
No slackness in the heart remains
That casts to love it's chariot reins !)

SECOND SEAMAID—
Sister, that I may hear the end,
Sleep on my leisure doth attend ;
Make not these pauses overlong
Lest both our senses he should steep ;—
And, still awake, you do Sleep wrong
To steal a dream away from Sleep.

FIRST SEAMAID—
True : . . . As I looked, he was dragged down,
And I, in fear lest he should drown
Right in among the wreckage swam ;
And stronger than the sea I am.
For, where *it* failed to bear his weight,
Whom Neptune could not fence from harms,
I held him, in his sad estate,
Secure and safe, within my arms.
Thus, driven o'er the raging sea,
Some power impelled us to the shore ;
There laid I him away from me,
And the sea's danger. There's no more,
No more to tell.

SECOND SEAMAID—
Then let us sleep ;
A better plan, methinks, than spend
In such mad revels on the deep
The hours we should to slumber lend.

FIRST SEAMAID—
She sleeps, but profits less than I,
Who on my new-found self am thrown :
Now for another I could die,
My life the first time seems my own.

And 'twixt my sister's heart and mine,
That thought they saw each other through,
The distance widens; my divine
Experience that she never knew
Sets me beyond her sympathy,
While mine for all life broader grows;
Ah, child, but I could wish for thee
My pain, in place of that repose:
My joy, in place of dance and song
That bound the utmost of your good.
To give again, I only long,
The help that left my spirit strong:—
To love, and help, and battle Wrong
Outside self's interest, I would:—
That done, and Wrong repulsed, and love
The gainer, what should be the end?
Emancipate, should I above
My old self rise, to comprehend
Worlds that mer-people cannot see,
Save by such chance as came to me?
Outside of self, my proper home
Such choice of acts would force to be;
The allotted lifetime passed, to foam
How should That turn, which was not me?

(Sings).

For awhile the thoughts suspending
  That I cannot share with thee,
Tell me, ah, what is the ending,
  Sister sweet, of you and me?
Even now my faith is shaken
  In the love we perfect thought;
That with coldness overtaken,
  Does our sea-life leave us aught?
Smiles I give you, dear, and giving
  Take the same from you again;
Common love, and common living,
  Leading nowhere and in vain.
Hand-in-hand, our hearts have never
  Each within the other seen,
Since one night's adventures sever
  Thus the ties that once have been.
You, your eyes are seaward turning
  Bent on present sights to cheer;
I am earthward, earthward yearning,
  With a love unfruitful here.
Here's no help, no comfort needed;
  Here's for sacrifice no room;

Nor for love that's but succeeded
By the fading into foam!—
(Speaks.)
Once I could not sigh so low
But attentive ears would know;
Once I made on sympathy
Less demand than was supply;
Now, most solitary grown,
I the first time sit alone:
No one can explore with me
My new-found identity.

* * * * *

MORNING.

FIRST SEAMAID—
This tossing of my spirit vext
With endless thought, is over rough.
Who says "Sleep comes to the perplext,
An' they be tired enough?"
Sleep, from my ever wearier brain,
Stands ever farther off.

Is this the cup that humans drink?
How doubly wakeful must they be
Who not for life alone must think,
But immortality!
Missing the last, *my* thought is waste,
Most wholly wasted, I!

I'll to the witch, who yonder dwells;
If I have hope to lose,
She'll but confirm what that foretells,
Or bid me not abuse
My little reason with less hope;—
Either, than this, I choose.

* * * * *

WITCH'S CAVE.

Enter FIRST SEAMAID.

WITCH—
So young! What brings you? For my counsel come
Only the old, who, loth to fall in foam,
Cling to their substance, for three hundred years
No wiser, when the final terror nears
Than to oppose it with unseemly noise.

FIRST SEAMAID.

I, in the hey-day of my youth and joys
Faint with the musing that my mind employs.
"What hope is left me?" I am come to ask.

(Repeats story and ambition to follow and serve the prince.)

WITCH—

What limits, daughter, to complete the task
Of self-renunciation, do you set
Upon the means?

FIRST SEAMAID—

Not any, mother.

WITCH—

Yet
The means are dreadful to enable you
Your so much envied task of love to do.
With human feet to go upon the land
After your wishes, I ordain that you
Upon invisible sharp knives must stand,
That cut with anguish every act you do.
And, that King Neptune may not miss the wreath
Of gold you carry, I must have your hair;
And, lest it's echoes should be lost beneath,
Here, where I dwell, I claim your voice most rare.
So, suffering, shorn, and dumb, is your mind still
Bent on the solacing of human ill?

FIRST SEAMAID—

If human ill include the ill of One
I'd battle it more maimed, and more alone,
Than I could be beside him.

WITCH—

Be it so.
Dumb, anguished, shaven, to your prince you go.
Smile on him. Dance before him. Be a shelf
Whereon to push his *ennui* out of sight.
If thy devotion back upon thyself
Unmarked return, to suffer is love's right
And thou may'st claim it justly. Should he love
And wed thee, thou immortal wilt become,
But if another he should prize above
Thee, thou'lt revert at sunrise into foam,
Whence thou did'st first arise. Aye, finished now
My work is. I have left a fringe of gold
To frame that face. For one so fair as thou
I would the stars more happiness foretold.
(Aside) (You've well-nigh pressed the secret out of life;—

Already on it's door your hand is set.
Touch but the right spring, and you end the strife
And for yourself a soul immortal get,
Patience, and sacrifice, and suffering knit
To brace one arm, reach very near to it).

* * * * *

FIRST SEAMAID *(Alone)*—

Voiceless, the golden riches spent
That on my head I bore,
And pain with every motion blent,
My heart, to hold its new content,
Swells to a limitless extent,
Expanding evermore.

Words to my silent lips, I know,
Thus sealed, will not arise;
But needs one to interpret so,
When, ever looking clearer through,
Love's thoughts their sole expression owe
To language of the eyes?

A fond farewell to my sea-home!
Not much I leave behind;—
Some light affections, say, and some
Most futile pleasures. Should I come
Again, 'twill only be in foam,
Formless, and undefined.

PRINCE'S PALACE.

PRINCE TO SEAMAID—

From words that only fret my mind,
Lady, I come to you.
The silence that you dwell behind
Is vast enough for two,
Most soft of flatterers, and most kind,
Past greed and interest true.

You, from between whose lashes slips
Pure praise, no commonplace
You ever take upon your lips
To wrong your matchless grace;
Who in the dance so lightly trips,
Who wears so fair a face?

Ah, who but one? I do not know
If she be living yet,
So far away she dwells, and so
Beyond me she is set;

Once seen, she haunts me still, altho'
  I struggle to forget.

Sweet eyes, that something seem to miss,
  Your sadness turn on me:
That grief of yours inspires for this
  Of mine such sympathy?
Unknown and secret your grief is,
  While mine to you I free.

In you my secret will repose
  As calmly as your own.
My heart on yours, with all its woes
  Convulsed and weak, is thrown.
Ah, through your dreams what spirit flows
  That you can live alone?

The stars you point to? With your hands
  The word immortal frame?
But by that word who understands
  That he shall be the same,
Enough himself, in other lands
  His earthly loves to claim?

For loves sown here unfruitfully
  What harvest does death give?
If man is forced to learn to die,
  Ere he has learned to live,
And neither art knows perfectly,
  Shall love in him survive?

AIR SPIRIT—*(Sings.)*
  Lo, underneath life's puzzled plan
    Love's groundworks deep are laid;
And death cannot unmake a man,
    Whom love for once has made;
This life of yours it's longings prove
An undeveloped phase of love.

PALACE GARDEN. NIGHT.

SEAMAID, *(alone)*—
  Why am I sad? that he should rest on me
  And I support him? that he should approve
  My help so far? or that my eyes should be
  Filled with the overflow of his vain love?
  His love, that, prosperous, means the end of mine
  Embodied in a form that melts away
  At sunrise on his wedding morn. Incline,
  Will, to that sun's up-rising! So divine

Is love, I'd lose it from my heart, to shine
Perfect, complete, and prosperous in thine,
Lord of the wealth that I aside must lay.
Love, that's so mighty, is beyond control:
Thou can'st not give me thine. So I lay down
My sweet aspirings to the matchless crown
Thy love had brought me,—an immortal soul.
And, inasmuch as thou hast loved in vain,
I clear my heart of grief, to hold thy pain:
And I will learn to prize this being less
Whose dissolution shows thy love's success,
How came so slight a thing so strongly made
That thou, immortal, com'st to me for aid?

Enter MESSENGER.

SEAMAID—

The prince is sad, and wills that I should go
In from the stars, to dance by candlelight?
All my high hopes, and longings infinite
Stoop at the call to ease an hour or so
Of his most weary leisure. In love's might
I summon up the purpose to be spent
In trivial seeming play. From what a height
Love reaches down, to present uses lent!

* * * * *

SEAMAID, *(alone)*—

He loves, he loves, where he must wed,
I saw it when they met to-day,
His wakening eyes the secret said;
His grief before her looks is fled;
And what she feels, ah, need I say?
Their love's the abiding sea; in spray
Mine on its bosom I must lay,
They will love on though I be dead.

NIGHT BEFORE WEDDING DAY. ON DECK OF PRINCE'S VESSEL.

SEAMAID (*alone*).

Night, from your calmness let me drink
  Indifference to the coming day,
That bids me back to nothing shrink;
That bids me cease to be, and think,
And love;—I, close on Lethe's brink,
  Find that the hardest thing to say.

I ? oh, eternal I ! did Fate
  Weigh with the balance I employ,
Myself enthroned, myself elate,
Myself the world would dominate !
My very love might turn to hate,
  For such as I too pure a joy.

That's not of me, That's not in vain !
  Of all the jewels on night's dark breast
Dawn robs the skies, but they remain
Still Night's, to scatter forth again,
None lost, in radiant tremulous rain,
  Down on the sea where I must rest.

With night they fade from sight away,
  And yet survive her, pulsing low
And silent through the alien day,
  Awaiting night's return ; so may
My love-star linger on to know
  If I return, ah, who shall say ?

This brief embodiment must end,
  This brain be foam, this body fail ?
Who put that Star there to befriend
My little life, more life may lend,
Lest It in vain it's use attend,
  And none be there it's light to hail.

Some new unguessed-at consciousness
  For me my living star may win ;
Me It was made to guide and bless,
Me It surviving needs no less
To use, love, thank it, and confess
  The endless joy I have therein.

What voice was that, what hint of something lost
Now close at hand ? lo, toward the ship, I see
My pale, sad sisters come. The last of me
They are the first to claim. They love me most
Of all, whom I love least. Had they not come
No thought I'd given to-night to my sea-home :
But now strange pity quivers through my mind
For their sad looks I lately left behind.

SISTERS—
We bring deliverance ! Take the witch's knife
(She bartered for our hair) and ere the sun
Bring your destruction, end the prince's life !
Then back to us and ours will you be won ;
Restored, a seamaid you will live again,
And joy absolve us of our present pain !

First Seamaid—

Ah, me, that they unanswered must remain!
My sisters, know, I never loved you more,
Yet must refuse you, and from life abstain.
Did I his welfare with this knife profane,
More would be lost than you would ever gain;
And you entreat me back to you in vain,
Though you are dearer than I knew before.
What! if my strongest love I desecrate,
My strength for loving any I abate,
And a new weakness in myself create,
Myself, whose form an hour will dissipate,
Weak, weak enough, in sooth! My love for you,
Though in this act you bid me prove it true,
Would lose in vigour did I bend my will
From truth to treason.

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